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ABSTRACT

Researchers analyzed information from student records and student organizations to determine the academic success, dropout, and graduation rates of Alaska Natives at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks (UAF) throughout the late 1970's. Perhaps due to political, social, and policy changes, Native student success peaked in the early 1970's and leveled off in the late 1970's. The leveling off may have been due to the greater enrollment of poorly prepared students, perhaps a result of new village high schools. Native freshmen dropout rates declined from 87% in 1963 to 75% in1975, but the chance of success between 1977 and 1979 was still only one in three. The number of Native students completing associate or bachelor's degrees also increased during the 1960's to peak in the early 1970's. One reason for the increase was the development of field-based teacher education programs which accounted for one third of all Native degrees between 1972 and 1980. Most bachelor's degrees were awarded to Native women in education or social science; most associate degrees, to men in technological fields. Between 1935 and 1980, UAF awarded 202 bachelor's degrees, 61 associate degrees, 4 masters's degrees, and 1 doctorate to Native students. (SB)

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NATIVE COLLEGE SUCCESS IN THE SEVENTIES: TRENDS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA AT FAIRBANKS

by

Judith Kleinfeld
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Velma Hubbard

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PURPOSE

This study examines academic success, dropout, and graduation rates of Alaska Natives at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks (UAF) through the late 1970s. It explores:

- Rates of academic success and dropout among Native students who enrolled as new college freshmen from 1963 through 1979.
- Relationships between standardized test scores, high school grades, and other factors, to the college success of Native students.
- College success rates of Native freshmen from the new small village high schools.
- Numbers of Native students graduating with associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees in different fields of study.

The purpose of this study is to provide basic statistical information on Native college success at UAF which can be used in identifying problem areas and program needs. While we draw attention to program changes at UAF during the 1970s, this research was not designed to explain changes in success rates. Rather, it is intended to bring them to the attention of educators and the Native community.

METHODS

Our statistics on academic success and drop-out rates are based on University of Alaska student records. However, since many students in registering choose not to identify themselves by ethnic origin, this source of information is incomplete. Therefore, we supplemented university records with information from the Student Orientation Services Program (SOS) which works closely with Native students.[1]

Pre-1975 information on the success rates of first-time Native

[1]Because of time and budget limitations, we used university records alone (without SOS supplementation) to obtain additional data on the success of Native students from different types of high schools who entered UAF in 1978 and 1979. Adding data from these years enabled us to increase the size of our population group of Native students who graduated from small village high schools.

freshmen comes from two earlier publications.[2] Statistics from the 1975-1979 years were collected by the third author of this study, Velma Hubbard, with the cooperation of the SOS program. Lists of Native college graduates were compiled from commencement programs; SOS program records; and records of the Cross-Cultural Education Development Program (X-CED), a field-based teacher training program.[3]

Definition of "Academic Success"

"Success" is a value-laden term which can be defined in many different ways. Since the primary purpose of this study was to monitor change in Native students' college performance over time, we used the definition of college success that we had used in earlier publications. Thus, we could compare success rates in the 1960s, early 1970s, and late 1970s.

A student was placed in the "college success" category if he or she earned at least a 2.0 (minimum passing) average grade and received at least 7.5 or more credits per semester (half the number of credits needed to advance in class standing) during the first enrollment in college. We based success on credits completed as well as grade-point average because, in some cases, students failing classes chose to drop most of their course load during the semester. Thus, a student could conceivably end up with a 4.0 grade-point average by dropping all but one course.

Some educators prefer a more rigorous definition of college success—earning at least a 2.0 average grade and at least 12 credits per semester during the first enrollment in college. Twelve credits is the minimum number of credits a student can earn per semester and maintain full-time student standing. We provide information in supplementary footnotes on the success rates of first-time Native freshmen from 1975-1979 when the 2.0 GPA/12 credits-per-semester definition of success is used. However, we prefer the less stringent

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[2]These are: Karen Kohout and Judith Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, ISEGR Report No. 40, 1974); Judith Kleinfeld, *Alaska Native Students and College Success* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Occasional Paper No. 14, 1978). See these publications for additional information on the definitions of "Native" student (self-identification or 1/4 or more Native on college or Bureau of Indian Affairs records) and "first-time freshmen" (a student who had not previously enrolled in a program of higher education).

[3]We have not included X-CED students, however, in statistics on academic success and drop-out rates. With the exception of statistics on UAF graduates, this study concerns Native freshmen on the UAF campus.

definition of success because many students have initial adjustment difficulties during the first semester or two.

In sum, this study uses a combination of grade-point average and credits attained as the measure for academic success. The most commonly used index of college success, in contrast, is drop-out rate. Drop-out statistics, however, can be quite misleading. As this study shows, many Native (and non-Native) students leave for a semester or two and later return to college. Thus, drop-out rates at any single point in time do not indicate what proportion of Native students have permanently left college and what proportion are taking a semester off. One approach to this problem is to examine drop-out rates only among those who have had at least 4 years to re-enroll in college. While we have done such analyses, serious problems still remain. First, students may enroll at another institution, such as a community college, and we will have inaccurately listed them as dropouts. Second, using dropout as an index of "failure" incorrectly implies that students have received little benefit from time spent successfully completing college courses. Our experience has been that Native students with some college experience have an advantage in the job market.

In short, we present drop-out statistics because this information is commonly requested by legislators and university administrators interested in an institution's "holding power." However, in our view, a far more informative measure of Native college success is the number of Native students successfully completing a particular number of credit hours.

Limitations of Study

This study is limited to an analysis of Native college success at a single institution, the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. Rates of success at this institution are important because UAF accounts for the largest number of Alaska Natives who obtain baccalaureate and graduate degrees.[4] However, large numbers of Native students also attend college at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, Alaska community colleges, and institutions outside of Alaska. We do not know the extent to which changes in Native college success at UAF represent more general trends.

A second limitation of this study is that in examining changes in success, we used university records, which contain only such infor-

[4] *U of A Today: Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred by the University of Alaska, 1978-79* (University of Alaska: Office of Institutional Planning, Research Report 80-1).

mation as age, sex, and standardized test scores. With this data base, we can do no more than provide clues for later investigation into the causes of Native college success and dropout. For example, we have found a moderately strong relationship between declaring a major and academic success. Yet, declaring a major may be only an indication of another factor, a sense of purpose in college, which we have not measured directly.

Academic Success Rates of Native Freshmen at UAF

Between 1963 and 1978, academic success among full-time Native freshmen increased, despite the fact that during this period the University enrolled an increasingly large number of rural students with low levels of academic preparation.

In the 1960s, less than a third of Native freshmen succeeded in college (Figure 1). In the early 1970s, rates of academic success greatly increased, with over 40 percent of Native freshmen succeeding in college by 1975.[5] During the later 1970s, however, success rates fundamentally reached a plateau. The major improvement, in short, occurred in the early 1970s.

The increase in Native academic success in the first half of the 1970s is more impressive than these figures indicate because of the decrease in the academic preparation of the Native freshmen who are attending UAF, as measured by standardized tests.[6] Most freshmen at UAF have taken the American College Test (ACT), in which scores range from 36 (99th percentile) to 0. Nationally, the average ACT score for college freshmen is 18.7. In 1963, only 12 percent of Native freshmen came to college with very low ACT scores of 10 or below (Table 1). By 1971, 30 percent of the Native freshmen had ACT scores in this range. In the late 1970s the proportion increased to 55 percent.[7]

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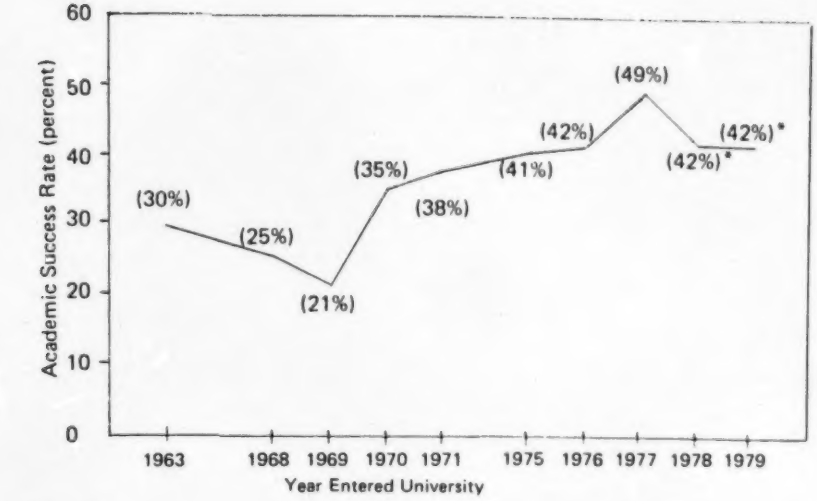
[5]Using the more stringent academic success criterion of at least a 2.0 grade-point average and 12 or more credits completed per semester, success rates for full-time Native freshmen are: 1975, 30 percent (N=63); 1976, 31 percent (N=72); 1977, 32 percent (N=74); 1978, 32 percent (N=72), (incomplete information); 1979, 33 percent (N=74), (incomplete information).

[6]Whether such standardized tests are appropriate measures of academic ability for minority students, such as Alaska Natives, is a continuing educational controversy. However, as we will later discuss, ACT scores are moderately strong predictors of academic success for Native students as they are for non-Native students. Such tests are useful indicators of how well students are likely to do in a college setting, even though they may be poor measures of "intellectual ability."

[7]A score in this range indicates that the student is at the 7th percentile or below, compared to students nationally who took the ACT test.



Number of New Freshmen: (37) (61) (73) (89) (105) (63) (72) (74) (115)* (—)*

*Incomplete information.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

Figure 1. Academic Success Rates of Native Freshmen Who Entered UAF Between 1963 and 1979

In sum, Native freshmen's college success at UAF rose in the early 1970s despite an increasing number of Native students with limited academic preparation. Success rates remained stable in the late 1970s despite another substantial increase in freshmen with low ACT scores. While the success rate of Native freshmen who entered with ACT scores in the lowest range (10 or below) did not increase much during the late 1970s, gains in the success rates did occur for Native freshmen who entered with medium to high ACT scores (Figure 2); this was especially true for those with the high ACT scores.

In addition to this increase in success, the number of new Native freshmen entering the University of Alaska increased substantially during the 1970s (Figure 1). Again, the major increase occurred in the early 1970s, with what appears to be a leveling off in the late

Table 1

Act Scores of Native Freshmen Who Entered UAF Between 1963 and 1978

Composite ACT Scores	ACT Distributions over Time			
	1963	1968	1971	1975-1978
Low (0-10)	12%	12%	30%	55%
Medium (11-20)	67	71	57	41
High (21+)	21	17	13	4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average ACT Score	16.7	16.0	13.9	9.7
Number of Students*	(33)	(58)	(97)	(308)

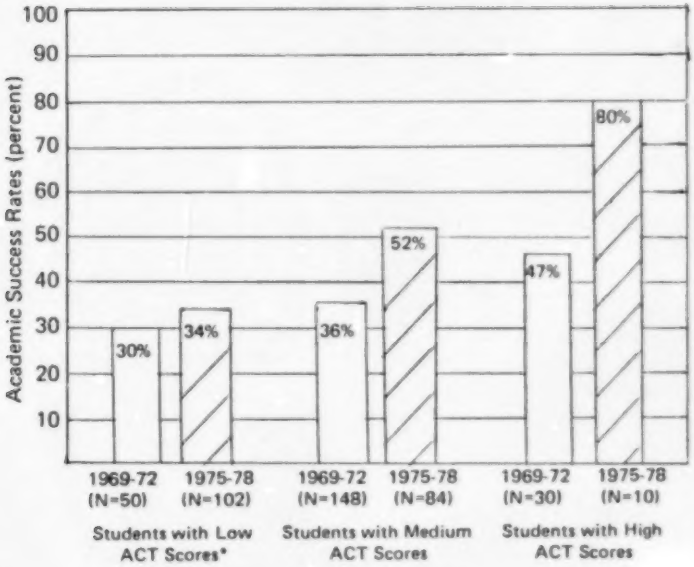
*Based on students for whom ACT scores were available.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

1970s. Enrollment figures, however, are erratic. They reflect various social changes—for example, the availability of high-paying jobs during the construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline. Moreover, we may have omitted some Native students, particularly those who did not use SOS services. It is clear, however, that the enrollment of non-Native freshmen at UAF increased markedly from the 1960s to the 1970s. More students enrolled, and more of these succeeded academically.

Reasons for Increase in Success

The reasons for the increase in the college success of Native students in the 1970s are complex and involve numerous political and economic developments. For example, the settlement of the Alaska Native Land Claims in 1971 focused attention on the need for educated Natives to staff the regional and village corporations established under the Land Claims Act. During the late 1960s as well, the success of minority groups in college became a national issue. UAF administrators and faculty became more aware of the problems of Native students and more willing to ease university requirements. In



*An ACT score below 10 is defined as low; from 11-20, medium; and 21+, high.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

Figure 2. Academic Success Rates of Native Freshmen with Different ACT Scores Who Entered UAF Between 1969 and 1978

addition, a special new program, Student Orientation Services, was developed at UAF in 1969. The program provides academic advising and tutoring services, sponsors seminars, and serves as a gathering place for students. In addition, students may enroll in such special courses as cross-cultural communication, which are combined with regular freshmen courses, such as anthropology. SOS instructors attend these freshmen courses with students to teach such skills as notetaking and writing research papers. The basic SOS program approach was developed during the early 1970s and the program gained additional experience in the late 1970s.

The development of these programs in the early 1970s appears to have had the greatest benefit for Native students with low levels of

academic preparation who were more likely to need the services SOS could provide. In 1969, for example, the academic success rate of Native freshmen with very low ACT scores was 0 percent; in 1972, it was 38 percent.[8] However, in the late 1970s only minimal gains in academic success occurred for Native students in this low-ACT range. At least for these students, a limit may have been reached in what the university can accomplish with this approach. Further gains in college success may require more attention to academic skills at the high school level.

Drop-out Rates of Native Freshmen at UAF

The drop-out rate of Native students at UAF has declined since 1963 but is still extremely high. Due to the problem of calculating dropout when students leave for awhile and later re-enroll, we first examined drop-out rates for freshmen entering UAF in 1963, 1968, and 1975. For each of those years, students would have had 4 years or more to re-enroll at UAF.

The attrition rate among Native students enrolled in these years declined from 87 percent in 1963 to 75 percent in 1975 (Table 2).[9] The greatest decline occurred in the proportion of academic dismissals. In 1963, over half the Native freshmen were dismissed for academic reasons. By 1975, only 19 percent were dismissed because of poor grades. This change may have occurred in part because of the academic assistance provided by the SOS program. In addition, according to some UAF faculty, university policies on academic disqualification were interpreted more leniently during this later period.

Drop-out rates after 1975 continued to decline slightly (Table 3). In 1975, for example, 46 percent of Native freshmen dropped out during the first semester and did not re-enroll at UAF. In 1977, 38 percent of Native freshmen dropped out during the first semester without returning. Similarly, in 1975, 29 percent of Native students

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[8]Kohout and Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education.*

[9]These figures should not be interpreted to mean that 25 percent of Native students graduated with associate or baccalaureate degrees. Some of the group were still enrolled in college when these figures were calculated. We do have comparative information on graduation rates for all full-time freshmen who enrolled in degree programs in 1973, compared to a random sample of non-Native freshmen. Six years later, only 13 percent of the Native group had graduated with a higher degree (7/52) from UAF. However, the UAF graduation rates among the non-Native sample was only 25 percent (11/44). Of course, both Native and non-Native students may have transferred and graduated from another higher-education program.

Table 2

Drop-Out Rates of Native Freshmen Who Enrolled in UAF in 1963, 1968, and 1975

	Drop-out Rates (percent)		
	1963	1968	1975
Voluntary Withdrawal	30%	48%	66%
Academic Dismissal	57	38	19
Total Dropout	87%	86%	75%
Number of Freshmen Enrolled each Year	(37)	(61)	(63)

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

enrolled in the last three semesters of college left without returning. In 1976, none did so. However, the changes in drop-out rates in these years are quite modest. While small improvements in dropout rates have occurred, substantially over half the Native freshmen enrolled at UAF in 1977 dropped out during their first two semesters and did not re-enroll.

In sum, the academic success of Native freshmen improved during the 1970s and drop-out rates declined slightly. However, Native freshmen continued to have a much lower academic success rate than non-Native freshmen (Figure 3). Sixty-eight percent of non-Native students were academically successful during their first enrollment, as opposed to only 40 percent of Native students.[10] This gap in college success between Native and non-Native students narrowed between 1971 and 1977, but only slightly.

The issue of how to decrease drop-out rates among Native students remains important. However, not all students who enter the university are or should be committed to finishing with an advanced degree.[11] To the contrary, many Native freshmen (about a third in a

[10]Using the more stringent criterion of at least a 2.00 GPA and 12 or more credits completed per semester, success rates for full-time Native and non-Native freshmen during 1978-79 are: Native freshmen, 33 percent; non-Native freshmen, 62 percent.

[11]For a discussion of the error in labeling "dropping out" as a policy problem, see Ron Scollon, "Gate-Keeping: Access or Retention," working paper, Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, 1981.

Table 3

Drop-out Rates by Semester for Native Freshmen Who Enrolled in UAF in 1975, 1976, and 1977

Semester	1975 Freshmen		1976 Freshmen		1977 Freshmen	
	Drop-outs[a]	Stop-Outs[b]	Drop-outs	Stop-Outs	Drop-outs	Stop-Outs
1st	46%	6%	42%	8%	38%	16%
2nd[c]	27	10	39	14	38	16
3rd	16	11	24	6	38	9
4th	21	0	17	8	6	0
5th	18	18	0	12	–	–
6th and beyond	29	0	0	0	–	–
Number of Freshmen	(63)		(72)		(74)	

[a]Proportion of freshmen who dropped out during this semester and never returned.

[b]Proportion of freshmen who dropped out during this semester and later returned. Between 20 percent and 45 percent of "stop-outs" return, but drop out again later and never return.

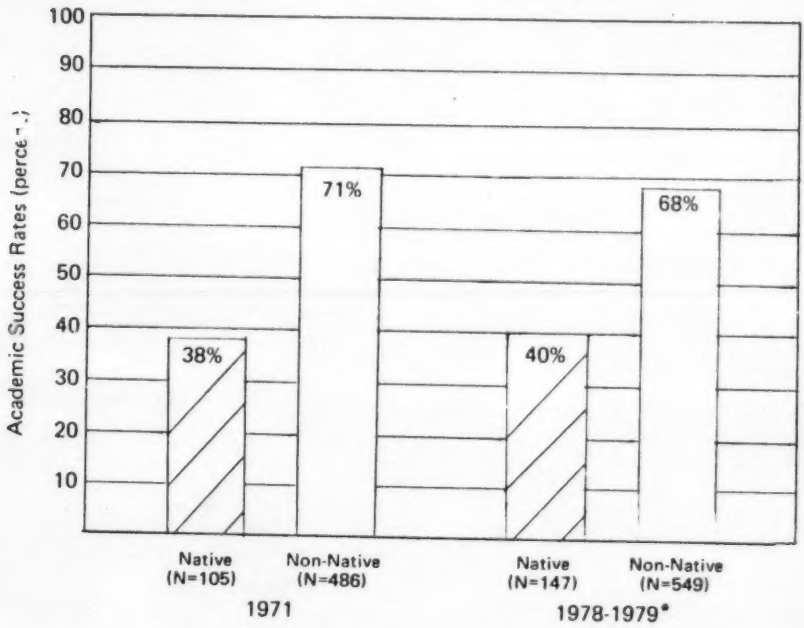
[c]These percentages refer not to the original total but to the proportion of remaining freshmen who then dropped out during the second semester, etc.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

1977 survey), said that they came to the university to "see what it is like."[12] Before concluding that current success and drop-out rates are the central "problem," we must learn more about *why* Native freshmen are coming to college, what they are seeking from the experience, why they drop out or stay, and where they go later.

Another significant policy issue is, why are Native freshmen at UAF arriving with lower and lower levels of academic preparation? One possible explanation could be that ACT scores are generally declining. However, this does not appear to be occurring. While nationally and within Alaska, ACT scores have gone down since 1970, the drop is very slight compared to the drop among entering Native freshmen (Figure 4). Another possible explanation is that the new

[12]Kleinfeld, *Alaska Native Students and College Success.*

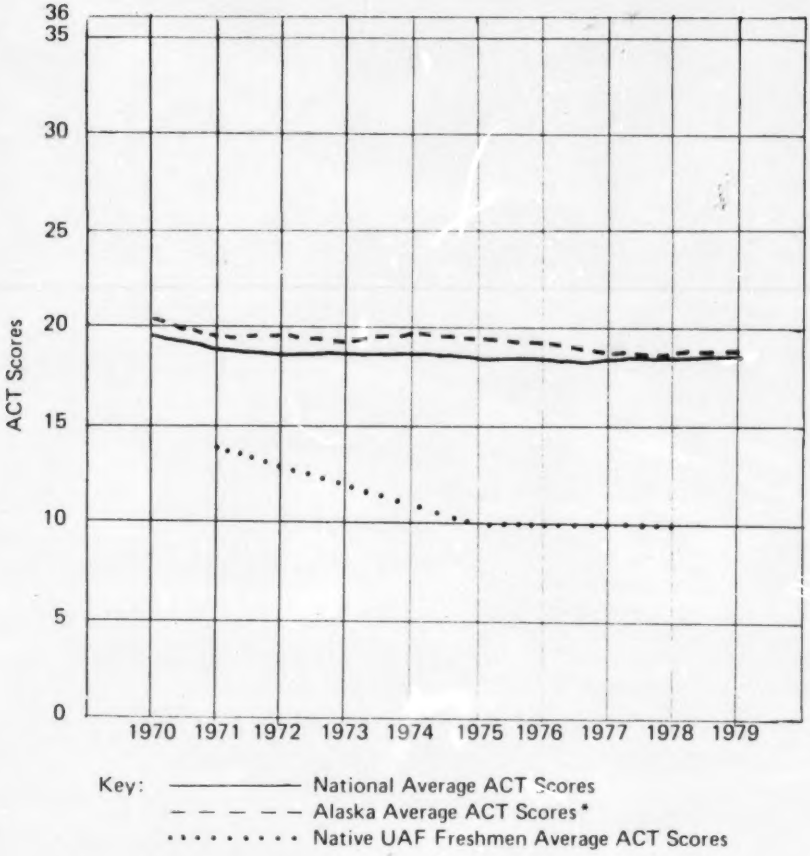


*This information came from university records which may be incomplete, particularly for Native students.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records, supplemented by SOS staff; Karen Kohout and Judith Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, ISER Report No. 40, 1974).

Figure 3. Academic Success Rates of Native and Non-Native Freshmen in 1971 and 1978–1979

small village high schools offer less adequate academic preparation than the former boarding schools most village students attended. A third possibility is that in the 1970s, more Native high school students became interested in college, and this larger group included students with lower academic preparation. A fourth possibility is that enrollment patterns have changed, and more academically talented Native students attended colleges outside Alaska in the 1970s than before. We do not know which, if any, of these explanations are correct. However, informal discussions with Native college students



*Scores of UAF freshmen in general are within a point of scores of Alaska students generally.

Source: Institutional Studies and Testing, University of Alaska, 1980.

Figure 4. Average ACT Scores (Composite) of National and Alaska College-Bound Freshmen from 1970–1979

do suggest that many of the most academically capable village students are indeed leaving Alaska to attend college. It is important to find out whether this pattern is occurring and whether or not Native students who leave Alaska do better or worse than those who attend universities within the state.

Relationships of Test Scores and Other Factors to Native Freshmens' College Success

A continuing controversy in the educational research literature is whether or not standardized tests, such as ACT scores, are useful in predicting college success for minority group students. Previous studies in the 1960s and early 1970s indicate moderately strong relationships between composite ACT scores and academic success among Native freshmen.[13] In the late 1970s, composite ACT scores also predicted college grades and credits attained, but not drop-out rates (Table 4). The ACT English subtest was the strongest predictor of academic success; indeed, it was a somewhat better predictor than the composite ACT score. The English ACT score also had a modest relationship to drop-out rates.

However, standardized test scores were no better than high-school grade-point average in predicting college success (Table 4). If ACT English test scores are controlled, high school grade-point average is a modest predictor of college success (r=.25). Similarly, if high school grades are controlled, ACT English scores continue to be a predictor of college success (r=.25). These two predictors—ACT English scores and high school grades—both explain some of the variation in the rate of Native freshmens' college success. Together, ACT English scores and high school grades account for 17 percent of the variation. Thus, academic background contributes to college success, but it is not the overwhelming factor.

In addition to academic background, declaring a major while in college is consistently related to success. Of those Native freshmen who entered UAF between 1975 and 1979, those who declared a major course of study were much less likely to drop out of school (Figure 5). Among Native freshmen, for example, 72 percent with undeclared majors dropped out compared to 40 percent of those who had declared majors. Among Native sophomores and juniors, drop-out rates for those with no declared majors were well over twice as high as for those with majors. This relationship between declaring a major and drop-out rates or college success does not occur simply because students who have declared a major are more academically competent. We found virtually no difference in high school grades between Native students who had declared or had not declared a major. The relationship between declaring a major and staying in college could have several different explanations. Possibly these students develop a better system of support within the university. Possibly they have experienced more thorough counseling and career

[13]Kleinfeld, *Alaska Native Students and College Success.*

Table 4

Relationships Between the Academic Progress of UAF Native Freshmen and Other Characteristics 1975-1979

	Academic Progress[a]			
	College Success[b]	College GPA	College Credits	Dropout
Academic Background				
High School GPA	.36	.37	.37	−.29
ACT English	.35	.44	.30	−.18
ACT Math	.20	.25	.21	−.04
ACT Natural Science	.21	.29	.17	−.05
ACT Social Science	.16	.26	.19	−.08
ACT Composite	.30	.38	.27	−.09
Personal Characteristics				
Eskimo	.08	− 02	.09	−.08
Indian	−.06	−.02	−.10	.05
Sex	.04	.05	.08	−.05
Age	−.17	−.20	−.25	.10
College Program				
Attended TVCC[c]	.04	.01	.03	.01
Declared a Major	.20	.28	.24	−.26
GPA/First Enrollment	−−	−−	−−	−.50
Number of Students	(249)	(249)	(249)	(249)

[a]Spearman rank correlation coefficients. Tests of statistical significance have not been carried out because the data concerns an entire population, not a sample.

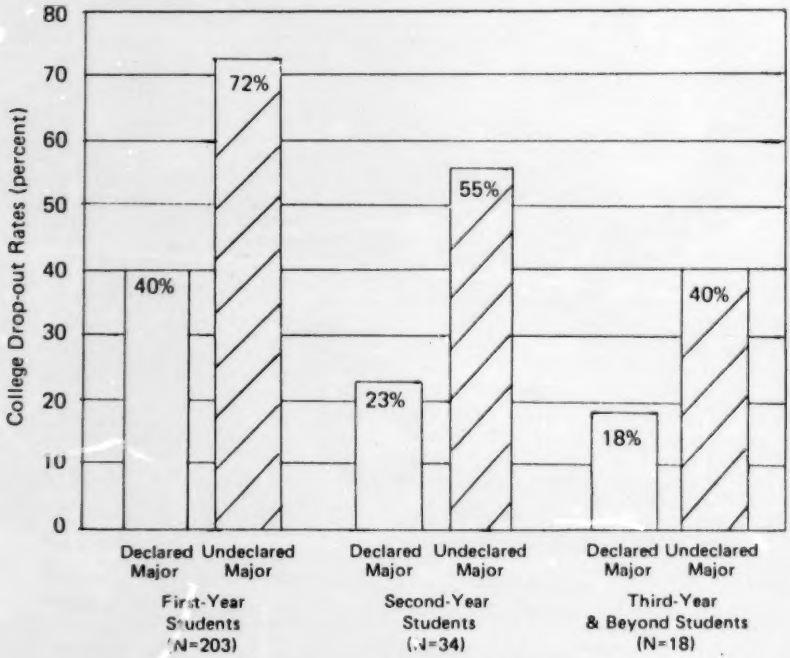
[b]College success is defined as maintaining a 2.0 GPA while completing at least 7.5 credits per semester during the first enrollment. GPA refers to cumulative GPA while attending UAF. Credits refer to the average number of credits earned per semester, also while attending UAF.

[c]Tanana Valley Community College.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records, 1980, supplemented by SOS staff.

direction in high school. Also, students who have reached the point of declaring a major may have been able to resolve the question of what they are in college for. Previous research suggests that a "sense of direction" may be a critical factor in Native college success.[14] Whatever the explanation, it is interesting that dropping out of college is as strongly related to "declaring a major" as it is to "academic background."

[14]Kleinfeld, *Alaska Native Students and College Success.*



Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS staff.

Figure 5. College Drop-out Rates of Native Students Who Entered UAF as Freshmen Between 1975 and 1979 by Whether or Not they Declared a Major

College Success and Village High Schools

An important educational concern in Alaska is whether the policy of developing small village high schools will affect rural students' chances of succeeding in college. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, most village students who attended high school had to leave home and enter regional boarding programs. In the 1976 Hootch consent decree, the State of Alaska reversed this policy and agreed to establish high schools in any village where an elementary school existed and there were one or more students of high school age. These small high schools were intended to enable Native adolescents to remain with their families in a familiar cultural setting, in order to reduce the social and emotional problems students experienced away from home and to correct the inequity of having high schools in small White, but not small Native, communities.[15] An unintended consequence of these schools, however, could be poorer academic preparation for college. These small schools generally offer a more limited academic program and fewer specialized teachers than larger boarding schools. On the other hand, these schools may provide compensating advantages, such as the increased individual attention and the greater emotional security that can come from going to school in a supportive cultural environment. Thus, village high schools could conceivably be reducing, increasing, or having no effect on college success.

In order to examine this issue, at least at UAF, we compared the college success rates of village Native students who graduated from high school in the boarding school programs during 1968-1973 with students who graduated from small village high schools during 1974-1979.[16] In making this comparison, one must remember that the college success rates of Native students in general increased during this later period due to changes in the college environment and other factors. Thus, the issue is *not* simply whether village high school students are doing better now than those students who attended the former boarding programs. Rather, the issue is the *amount* of improvement in college success rates. For example, if village high schools were having a positive effect on Native college success rates, we would expect to see greater gains in college success for rural Native students who graduated from village high schools

[15]For a discussion of these issues, see: Ray Barnhardt, *Small High School Programs for Rural Alaska* (University of Alaska: Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, 1979); Judith Kleinfeld, *A Long Way from Home* (University of Alaska: Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, 1974).

[16]In some cases, students may have attended another type of high school for part of their program.

than for Native students who graduated from other types of high school programs. If village high schools were neither increasing nor reducing rates of Native college success, we would expect to see about the same improvement in college success for rural Native graduates of village high schools as for Native graduates of other types of high schools.

As Figure 6 shows, Native students from the village high schools were more successful than those from the boarding schools of an earlier period. From 1968-1974, Native freshmen entering UAF from the boarding programs had a college success rate of 21 percent; in 1975-1979, Native freshmen entering UAF from the village high schools had a college success rate of 31 percent. Students from village high schools show the same *absolute* increase in success (a 10-percent gain) during this later period as students from other types of high schools. However, the *rate* of increase is higher for the village high school graduates than for rural students who graduated from town high schools or boarding schools.

In sum, this analysis suggests that the development of village high schools has not reduced the college success of rural students who attend UAF. Whether these schools have increased Native college success rates overall depends on whether we are more interested in absolute or proportionate degrees of change. Nonetheless, village school freshmen still have lower chances of succeeding at UAF than those from other types of high schools. Fewer than one in three succeeded during 1975-1979. Improving the quality of education in rural Alaska high schools remains a central issue.

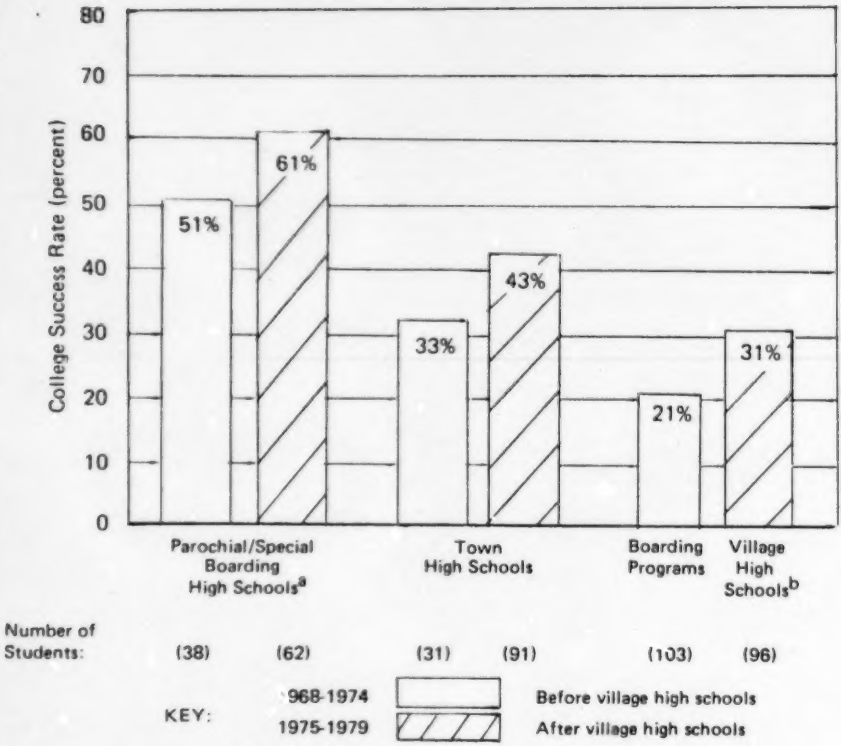
Special boarding school programs,[17] continue to graduate students who tend to be most successful in college. To what extent these higher rates of college success result from the schools enrolling a more academically-oriented student body and to what extent they result from the type of education occurring at the school is not clear. An intensive study of one such school, St. Mary's, suggests that, in at least this situation, student selection explains only part of the high success rate.[18] The higher academic expectations at the school, the informal education that occurs outside the classroom, and the climate of clear values consistent with the values of students' home villages may also contribute to college success.

Native College Graduates at UAF: 1934-1980

The number of Native college students graduating from UAF

[17]Such as St. Mary's (a Catholic boarding school in southwestern Alaska) and Mt. Edgecumbe (a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school in Sitka).

[18]J.S. Kleinfeld, *Eskimo School on the Andreafsky* (New York: Praeger, 1979).



[a]Primarily St. Mary's students.

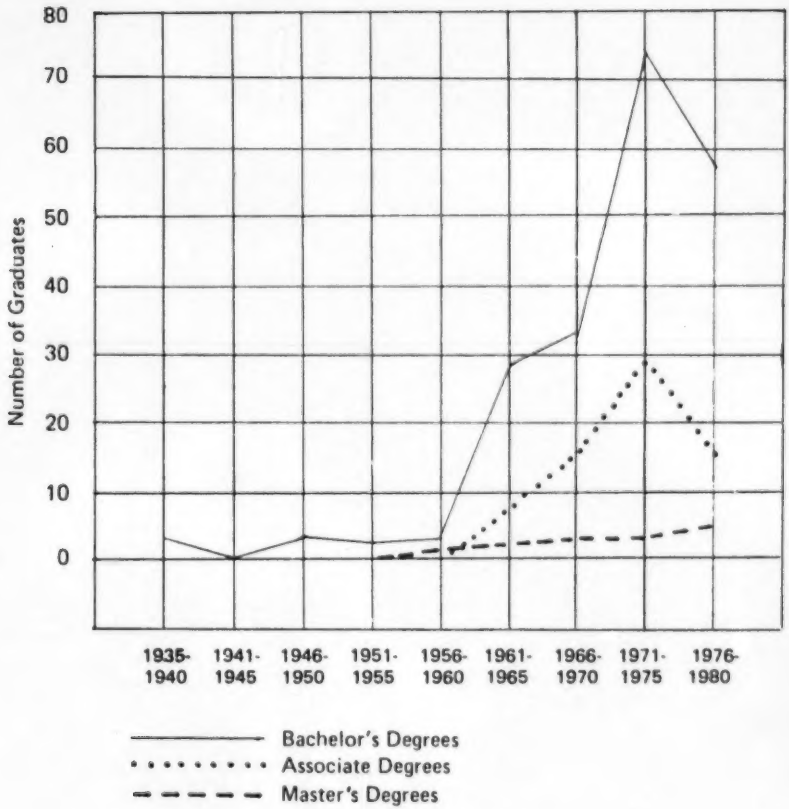
[b]Between 1968-1974, village students attended public boarding schools and urban boarding home program. Between 1975-1979, village students attended primarily village high schools.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records, supplemented by SOS staff.

Figure 6. College Success Rates of UAF Rural Native Freshmen Graduating from Different Types of High Schools Before and After Development of Village High Schools

with associate and bachelor's degrees increased through the 1960s and peaked in the early 1970s (Figure 7). In recent years, UAF has graduated fewer Native students with associate and baccalaureate degrees.

Between 1935 and 1980, UAF graduated a total of 202 Native students with bachelor's degrees and 61 Native students with asso-



Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records, Student Orientation Services Program and X-CED Program.

Figure 7. College Degrees Awarded Alaska Natives at UAF from 1935–1980

ciate degrees. In addition, 14 Native students received master's degrees and 1 student, a doctoral degree. The number of Native students receiving baccalaureate degrees sharply increased after 1960 and continued to increase until the late 1970s. One factor accounting for this increase in Native college graduates was the development of field-based teacher-education programs in the early 1970s. In the current Cross-Cultural Educational Development Program (X-CED,

formerly ARTTC), students complete coursework primarily at home, assisted by education faculty who live in rural areas and travel to students' villages. Between 1972 and 1980, field-based programs produced 44 Native graduates. During this period, about one-third of all UAF Native baccalaureate degrees and two-thirds of the degrees awarded Native students in the field of education went to X-CED graduates. Field-based programs during this period also accounted for half of the master's degrees awarded Natives, and two-thirds of those master's degrees awarded in education. The decline in Native college graduates during the late 1970s resulted from a decrease in the number of graduates from the X-CED program. The number of graduates from the campus programs remained virtually identical between 1971-1975 and 1976-1980, while the number of graduates from field-based programs dropped slightly over 50 percent. According to X-CED staff, this drop resulted in part from a major change in the delivery structure and a discontinuation of the stipend for participating students.

In the 1970s, education was the major degree field of most Native students who received bachelor's degrees (Figure 8).[19] Only 10 students received degrees in business management. Only 5 Native students graduated with degrees in the natural sciences.

In short, large groups of Native graduates from UAF are being prepared for careers in schools and perhaps social service organizations. Comparatively few are being trained for work in the Native profit corporations or in other business fields.

Another trend is the fewer number of Native men, compared to women, who are receiving baccalaureate degrees.[20] Between 1972 and 1980, about two and a half times more Native women than men received bachelor's degrees. From 1976 to 1980, over three times as many Native women received degrees than men. In the spring of 1981, this trend continued with almost a 4:1 ratio of female-to-male graduates. Moreover, Native women outnumber men in every degree area, even in such traditional "male" fields as business management.

This trend in favor of Native women is of recent origin. Prior to 1970, Native male college graduates (N=39) slightly outnumbered women graduates (N=33). While the numbers of all Native UAF college graduates generally decreased in the late 1970s, the decline was much steeper for men (Figure 9).

[19]Our records prior to 1972 contain incomplete information on major programs of study.

[20]In the University of Alaska system, women tend to receive more baccalaureate degrees (55 percent between July 1977 and June 1978), but the difference between men and women is slight. Alaska Department of Labor, *Women in Alaska's Labor Force*, May 1980, p. 17.

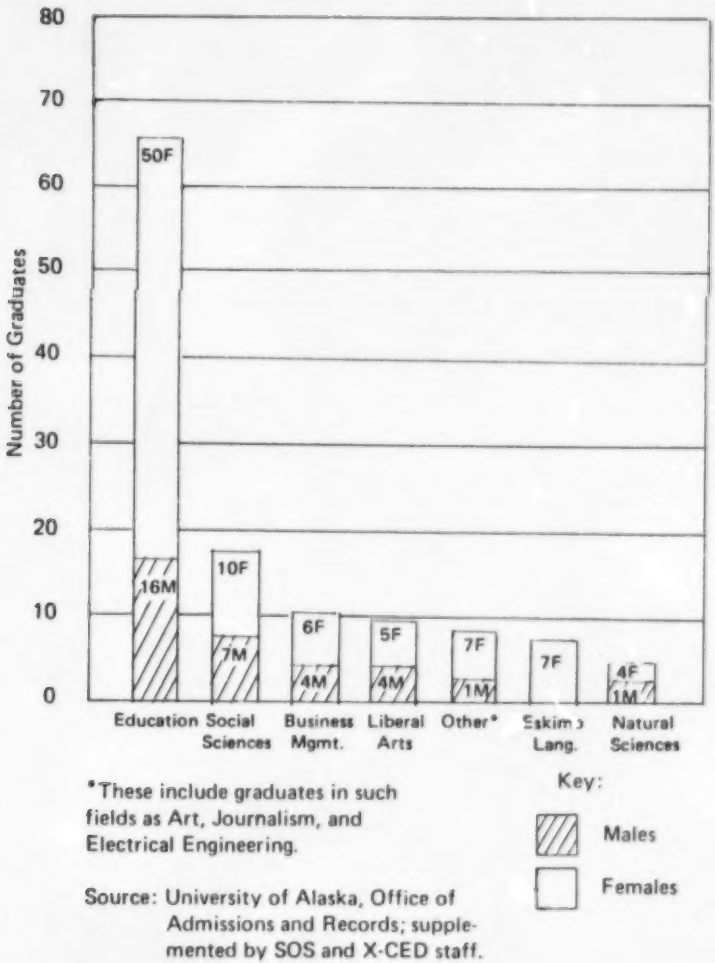
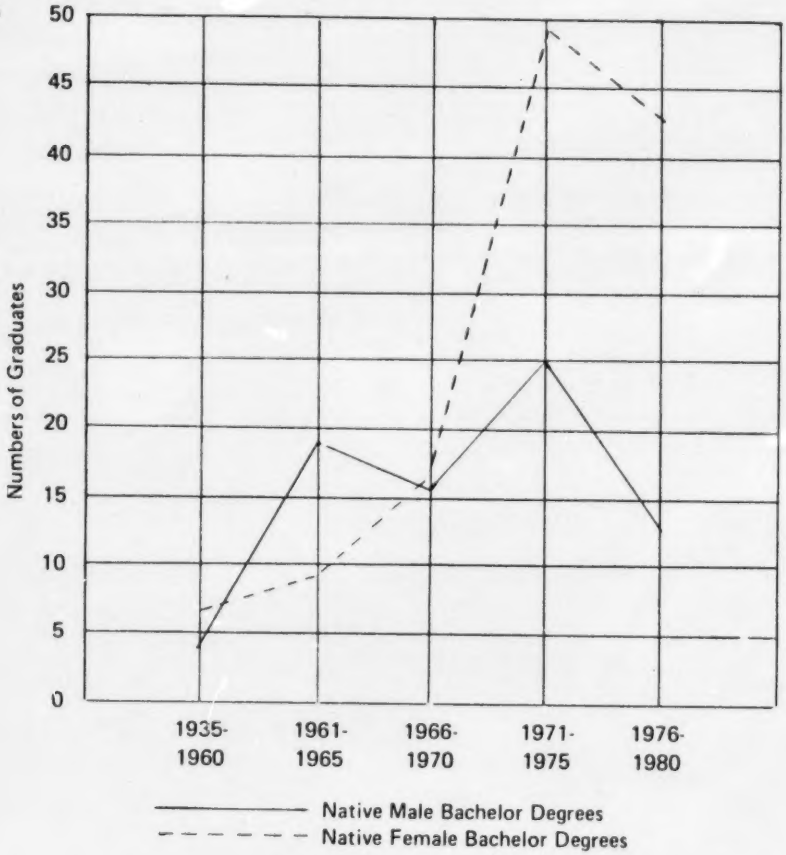


Figure 8. Bachelor's Degrees Received by Alaska Natives at UAF by Sex and Major Field of Study: 1972–1980

The greater number of women college graduates may in part result from the development of field-based teacher education programs, which account for large numbers of Native college graduates and which primarily enroll female students. It may also result from growing Native sex differentiation in career paths, with females choosing white-collar work—where higher education is a career

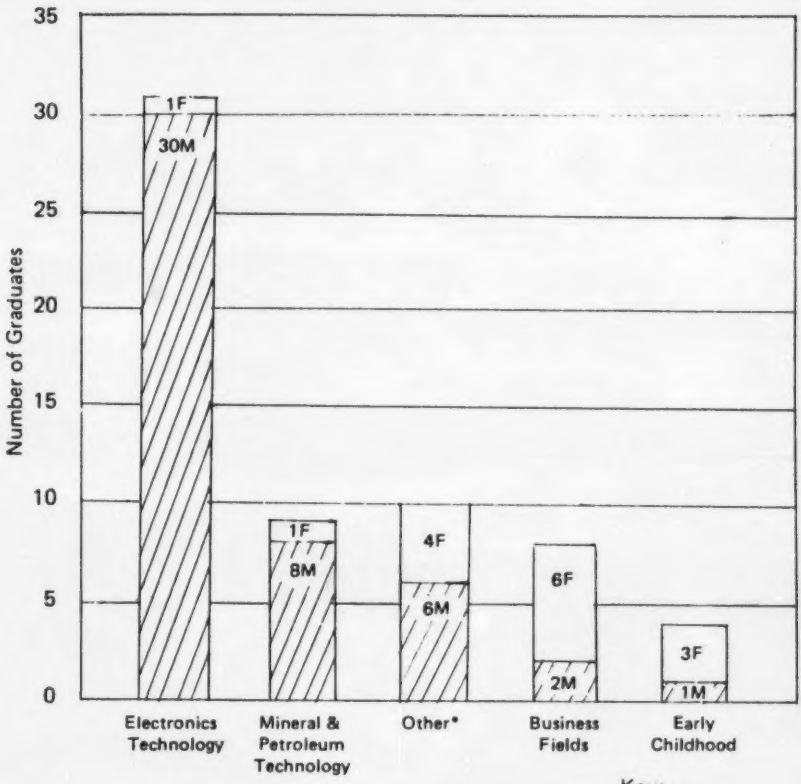


Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS and X-CED staff.

Figure 9. Native Bachelor Degrees by Sex at UAF from 1935–1980

advantage—and males choosing blue-collar occupations.[21] In associate degree fields, particularly those leading to work in electronics technology and mineral and petroleum technology, Native male

[21] For an example of this pattern among North Slope Inupiat, see Judith Kleinfeld, Jack Kruse, and Robert Travis, *Different Paths of Inupiat Men and Women in the Wage Economy, the North Slope Experience* (Fairbanks: Institute of Social and Economic Research Report No. 50, 1980), 53 pp.



*These include graduates in such fields as justice, police administration, and accounting.

Source: University of Alaska, Office of Admissions and Records; supplemented by SOS and X-CED staff.

Figure 10. Associate Degrees Received by Alaska Natives at UAF by Sex and Major Field of Study from 1966–1980

graduates strongly outnumber females (Figure 10). Whether or not this trend continues at UAF in the 1980s and whether it is typical of colleges other than UAF should be examined.

Conclusion

The proportion of Native freshmen who succeeded at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks peaked in the early 1970s and leveled off during the late 1970s. Similarly, the number of Native students graduating with baccalaureate degrees reached a high in the early 1970s and thereafter declined. While political and social changes may also have been important, the rise in Native college success in the late 1960s and early 1970s coincided with a general change in university policy toward Native students. During this time, for example, the university established special programs to assist Alaska Natives, particularly the Student Orientation Services on the main campus and the field-based X-CED program.

The leveling off of success rates in the late 1970s is partially related to a large increase in the proportion of entering Native freshmen with limited academic preparation. Despite the assistance of special programs such as SOS, Native freshmen with low ACT scores still have only about a one-in-three chance of succeeding academically. The reasons for this increase in Native students without sufficient preparation for college warrants attention. Possibly, this trend simply indicates a change in enrollment patterns. As Native youth become more knowledgeable about college options, more academically competent Native students may be choosing to attend college elsewhere. If this change is occurring, it is important to know if Native students do as well or better at other colleges which may not offer special orientation or Native Studies programs.

The decline in numbers of Native male college graduates at UAF may also be a matter for concern. First, it is important to determine if the graduation pattern at UAF is representative of other colleges. If this trend does occur elsewhere, its basis should be examined Since the trend is recent, its cause may lie more with the impact of the social and economic changes in Alaska in the late 1970s than with traditional cultural patterns.

Fundamentally, Native college success at UAF reached a plateau in the late 1970s. The gains of the early 1970s were maintained, at least for the campus-based program. However, no substantial improvements occurred in freshmen success, drop-out rates, or numbers of Native graduates.